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Letter dated 21 July 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith for your information a letter dated 18 July 1997 addressed to you from Prince Norodom Ranariddh, First Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, concerning the bloody coup d'état launched on 4 and 5 July 1997 by Second Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen against the democratically elected First Prime Minister.

I would be deeply grateful to you if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 109 and 110, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) SISOWATH Sirirath
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Letter dated 18 July 1997 from the First Prime Minister of Cambodia addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to express my deep gratitude for your concern over the situation in my country and your leadership in the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the current political crisis in Cambodia. I am deeply gratified to you for receiving me on Thursday, 10 July, at United Nations Headquarters, and sharing with me your views on the matter.

As you are well aware, the crisis is far from over. As I write this letter, the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations are working diligently to bring the situation back into the framework of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements.

May I be permitted to clarify a number of issues in the development of the crisis to place the situation in the proper context:

1. The main reason advanced by the authors of the brutal "coup d'état" against me, the legally elected First Prime Minister as the result of a United Nations-organized and supervised election, as contained in a letter dated 8 July 1997 to you from Samdech Chea Sim, the President of the Cambodian's People's Party and Chief of State a.i., was the "penetration of illegal forces, above all, hardcore and hardline armed Khmer Rouge solders" in and around Phnom Penh. United Nations human rights workers investigating the claim have declared today that they found no evidence to support such a claim. As the co-Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, I had no knowledge, nor was I informed by my coalition partners, of any Khmer Rouge infiltrations. Samdech Hun Sen alone issued such an order, and not I, and he then again violated the Joint High Command's order. As Head of State a.i., Samdech Chea Sim should not have taken side on this issue.

2. The authors of the coup also claimed that "these preventive actions made by the Royal Government have been decided to defend the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the achievements obtained since the general elections of 1993". It is needless for me to refute this claim by the coup leaders, as the entire world has been informed by the media and international aid workers of the barbaric behaviour of armed partisans of the Cambodian People's Party. As many as 40 people have died in the capital of Phnom Penh alone, many of them after having been tortured. The entire capital has been looted by the partisans of the Cambodian People's Party, who behaved worse than conquerors in a conquered land.

3. The authors of the "coup" further accused me and my followers of having "joined hands with the outlawed Khmer Rouge"; however, no evidence has been produced to substantiate this claim.

4. Samdech Chea Sim's letter made reference to the fact that "the Prince has chosen his way, away from the motherland and the Cambodian people". I wish to inform you that I was scheduled to leave Cambodia for France later in the

afternoon of 5 July 1997, but was convinced to leave earlier by my military advisers and the late General Ho Sok, who were aware of an imminent coup against me and feared for my life. Subsequent events in Phnom Penh confirmed the fear of my aides that had I stayed, I would surely have been assassinated.

5. Samdech Hun Sen himself fled the country before he ordered the coup d'état and was reported to be in Hanoi, as confirmed by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry. He never told anybody where he had gone. Only after the victorious coup did he return to Phnom Penh. All the video tapes shown on national television were pre-recorded before Samdech Hun Sen's departure for Viet Nam.

6. Samdech Chea Sim informed you that a "state of normalcy has returned" in Cambodia. Reports from Phnom Penh and other parts of Cambodia suggest otherwise. Armed partisans of the Cambodian People's Party continue to hunt down and persecute members of the Funcinpec Party, the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, the Khmer Nation Party and other opposition parties. To date, as many as 29 members of the Cambodian Parliament and numerous government officials not belonging to the Cambodian People's Party or not cooperating with it, have fled for their lives to neighbouring countries. Others are still in hiding and waiting for the opportunity to cross the border as well.

7. Finally, I would be deeply grateful to you if your Special Representative on Human Rights in Cambodia, Mr. Thomas Hammerberg, would investigate the killings and torture in custody committed by the order of Samdech Hun Sen against Funcinpec cadres, and report it to you and to the Third Committee and the plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. These endless crimes of political harassment, intimidation and threat continue to this present day.

(Signed) NORODOM Ranariddh
First Prime Minister